



Community Appearance Commission

Minutes January 7, 2009

The regular meeting of the Salisbury Community Appearance Commission was called to order Wednesday, January 7, 2009, at 4 p.m. by Barbara Perry, Chair, in the Council Chambers, 217 South Main Street, Salisbury, North Carolina. The following members were present and absent:

Present: Connie Baker, Suzanne Casey, Greta Connor, Suzette Davis, Diane Gibbs, Barbara Lawther, Sean Meyers, Barbara Perry, and Sara Robinson

Absent: Bill Safrit and Tom Wolpert

Staff: Mark Lewis, Lynn Raker and Diana Moghrabi

The minutes of the December 3, 2008, meeting were approved as submitted. The financial report was accepted.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Neighborhoods & Education Committee

Greta Connor reported that the Jersey City and Fairview Heights entrance signs will be installed by June 30, 2009.

Neighborhoods and Education had a brief meeting prior to today's regular meeting. There are concerns about the north end of N. Main Street regarding the number of deteriorated houses and foreclosures in that area.

Lynn Raker followed up with the information regarding The Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) that will be addressed by City Council at the January 20, 2009, meeting second reading. Mark Lewis also commented that this is a fabulous opportunity for Salisbury. Barbara Perry added that the Salisbury Community Development Corporation is doing a great job counseling residents threatened by foreclosure.

The Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP) was authorized by the Housing and Economic Recovery Act passed by Congress in 2008. It is an adjunct of the Community Development Block Grant program (CDBG) created for the purpose of providing emergency assistance to state and local governments to acquire and redevelop foreclosed properties that might otherwise become sources of abandonment and blight. Funding allocated to North Carolina in the amount of \$52.3 million will be distributed within twenty-three counties with the greatest need. The City of Salisbury, as a local government within one of the targeted areas, is eligible to apply for a portion of these funds.

The city intends to apply for the maximum grant amount of \$5 million to help stabilize neighborhoods that have been hard-hit by foreclosure, abandonment and blight. Working in partnership with the Salisbury Community Development Corporation (CDC), the city plans to acquire and rehabilitate residential properties that have been abandoned or foreclosed upon, particularly in areas where foreclosure activity has been prevalent. Activities will also include demolition and redevelopment of

demolished or vacant properties. Financial mechanisms to assist homebuyers will also be included in the project. At least 30 percent of funds must be used to assist households whose incomes do not exceed 50 percent area median income.

This application is due February 3, 2009. February 16 Salisbury should hear whether or not they received the grant.

The West End neighborhood is happy to receive new street lighting. Citizens have also let Greta know they are happy with the new ordinance addressing “no parking on the front lawn.”

Parking on the sidewalk is an appearance issue, but it is also dangerous. This item needs enforcement, too.

At the S.N.A.G. meeting, Chris Branham submitted a report for the Code Services Division. The items included in his report do impact neighborhood appearances. Greta complimented Code Services Division’s hard work.

The Neighborhood Leaders Alliance will meet April 23 at 4 p.m. at One Water Street.

Art in Public Places

Barbara Perry updated the Commission on the activities of the Downtown Outdoor Sculpture Show. The jury selection committee has chosen 14 pieces for this program. The show begins in April 2009 and will run through January 2010. There will be a preview party.

The Cotton Mill project will be phased work.

Cheerwine met with the Mayor and new marketing person wishes to involve all ages in public art.

The grant cycle is coming up.

Holiday Decorations

December 11, 2008, The Salisbury Community Appearance Commission (CAC) selected winners for the Fourth Annual Holiday Storefront Decorations Awards. The awards were designed to promote a festive atmosphere downtown during the holiday season.

The jury members enjoyed viewing more than 60 seasonal displays created by downtown businesses. After a spirited discussion, the jury settled on eight different awards to honor the most creative efforts of the shopkeepers.

The award for the **Best Overall Holiday Display** was given to *Salisbury Square Antiques* for their imaginative use of window space, creating a charming story of Christmases past. (111 South Main St.)

The other awards were:

Best Themed Display: *Wooden Stone (106 South Main St.)*

Most Creative Display: *A Step in Time (5 Easy St.)*

Best Display for Children (also noted for effective lighting): *Just the Thing (103 North Main St.)*

Most “Tasteful” Display: *Tastebuds Coffee Shop (106 North Main St.)*

Most Beautiful Display: *Caniche (200 South Main St.)*

Most Nostalgic Display: *Bernhardt Hardware Co. (113 North Main St.)*

Best New Shop Display (creative use of merchandise for seasonal decoration!): *Hot Junk (205 South Main St.)*

It was noted that members of CAC received a complaint about the choices and the date (too early) on which winners were chosen.

Downtown Christmas Decorations

The aged and diminishing appearance of the downtown Christmas decorations continues to be a topic of discussion. Downtown Salisbury, Inc. is currently in charge of the holiday street decorations and the CAC has great admiration for DSI and the work they do. The current decorations have outlived their expected life of eight years. A committee will meet to discuss a plan or make a recommendation for upcoming years. Old decorations could be sold or refurbished. Barbara Lawther will take a lead on this issue.

The Commission discussed the possibilities of transferring responsibility for the decorations to the City of Salisbury. Funding would require a placeholder in the City Budget. The City has necessary equipment to put them up. Salisbury is the County seat; people take a lot of pride in the appearance of the city at Christmas time. CAC is not volunteering to take on total responsibility; however they will collaborate with DSI on a master plan for holiday decorations. Councilman Lewis suggested the responsibility may eventually fall to an Arts & Culture Commission or division, should such be established.

Grants

Davis Law Office decided to postpone some work so the money came back for distribution. The committee was able to give a grant to 110 S. Main Street. (The Literary Book Post is moving across the street from their current location.)

There is about \$1,000 total left in the grant program for this cycle. Lynn will contact grant recipients to be sure they are still going to follow through on their work.

Awards

The Awards Luncheon will be held next year about this time. The committee will need to do some preliminary planning for this luncheon.

NEW BUSINESS

Goals for 2008-2009

Barbara Lawther made a MOTION to accept the Community Appearance Goals for 2009-2010 amending the goals to read that this is year 2 of 3 for a “3-year phased purchase and installation of additional trash receptacles and benches.” Suzanne Casey seconded the motion with all members voting AYE. (7-0) The goals will be presented January 20 at the City Council meeting. Members are encouraged to attend.

Electronic Signs

Barbara Perry offered some background regarding the issue of LED or electronic signs in Salisbury. The local colleges are very interested in using electronic signs. The CAC has been opposed to adding this type of signage in Salisbury. Planning Board had tabled the item while awaiting more information from studies.

A Council Committee has recommended allowing this type of signage in the Institutional Campus (IC) Zoning District only. There are about 24 properties in this zoning district that are not school related. There are more details to consider (like allowing text and not graphics). Planning Board will hold a Courtesy Hearing on this issue January 27, 2009. City Council will likely hold a Public Hearing in February 2009.

Cary's standards allow changeable copy signs at theaters, service stations, and schools; Salisbury currently allows changeable copy signs. Qualifications are included in the ordinance. Lynn shared some other findings around North Carolina, including restricting such signage by use, such as colleges only. Senior Planner Mitchell had suggested that might be illegal, but he would verify with Institute of Government.

Historic Preservation Incentive Grant Guidelines

The CAC has been asked to review the Historic Preservation Incentive Grant guidelines, related to commercial properties. Owner-occupied homes are currently eligible. The proposal is to add owner-occupied businesses. Connie Baker believes this is a reasonable change. There was a discussion.

The CAC voted unanimously to recommend allowing owner-occupied businesses to be eligible for HPC incentive grants. (9-0)

CAC Membership

This time of year we look at individual terms that soon will end. Suzette Davis has served two consecutive terms on the CAC and is, therefore, not eligible for another term at this time. Suzanne Casey has agreed to serve another term, as well as, Diane Gibb. We will check with Tom Wolpert to see if he would like to serve another term.

Members recommended Mr. or Mrs. Evans, Sue McHugh, Emily Perry, Mimi Howard, James Alexander, and Mr. or Mrs. Hall (Ed and Cheryl).

Committee assignments will be made in February.

OTHER BUSINESS

Being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:30 p.m. The next regular CAC meeting will be February 4, 2009.

Respectfully submitted,

Diana Moghrabi
Secretary